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## **Senate fighting spread of invasive species in Michigan**

**LANSING** – Fighting the spread and destruction of invasive species in Michigan has received a major boost as the Senate voted to make protecting Michigan’s ecosystem a top priority, announced Sen. Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac.

The Senate passed a package of bills today (Senate Bills 211-217, 507) that is designed to protect Michigan’s environment from invasive plants and insects like the Eurasian milfoil, hydrilla and Emerald Ash Borer that destroy natural Michigan species.

One way to control the destruction is through public education. SB 215, sponsored by Gilbert, would create the Invasive Species Fund to be used to educate the public on preventing invasive species. It would require the Department of Natural Resources to post the list of prohibited and restricted species on their website and provide photos or sketches of each one. The fund would be supported from fines, penalties and permit fees collected under the new act.

“Common sense says that the best way to control invasive species is by helping people to identify the plants and insects and how to get rid of them,” Gilbert said. “Most people aren’t able to simply look at these organisms and identify them, but by posting pictures and descriptions on the web they’ll have another resource at their disposal. This will help control invasive plants in smaller lakes around the state where they might not otherwise be found.”

The other bills in the package would:

- Identify prohibited insects and aquatic plant species;
- Prohibit the release and introduction of certain insects and aquatic plant species;
- Amend the Natural Resources and Protection Act to recognize the existence of and prohibit genetically engineered or non-native aquatic plants;
- Establish fines and penalties for violating the new regulations;
- Require the DNR to post requirements and penalties on their website; and
- Establish a Non-native Species Advisory Council.

The Advisory Council would establish criteria for identifying infested waterways and make recommendations regarding the state’s efforts to eradicate invasive species. The council also would report annually to the Legislature with recommendations for additions to the lists of invasive species and infested waterways.

(More)

This legislation is similar to prohibitions put in place last year to protect Michigan's waterways from invasion by non-native fish species.

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**Comments from Sen. Gilbert on invasive species are available for download on the Senate Majority Audiowire at [www.senate.michigan.gov/gop](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop).**